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## Notes and Opinions.

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**Criticism and Devotion.**—The spirit in which criticism is treated even by intelligent writers appears in the following sentences taken from a prominent religious journal: "The dry-as-dust critic talks patronizingly of the devout man who finds in the Word that which feeds his soul. Such study of the Scripture, he says, is not scientific." Of course, it would be possible to differ as to who should be classed as dry-as-dust critics, and the position here ascribed to them is doubtless true of some scholars. But, notwithstanding, there are critics who are not "dry as dust," and who begin and end their labors with a prayer for divine help and blessing. The worst of such sort of characterization of unspiritual critics is that, as it is introduced in the paper in question, it will almost certainly tend to deepen prejudice against criticism of all sorts. Such a result is one to be deprecated and will some day react disastrously upon its possessor. The day is past—as the future of the new *Dictionary of the Bible* will show—when criticism is to be divorced by either friend or foe from religious life.

**The "Paulinism" of Jesus.**—Professor Bruce, in the June *Expositor*, has suggestively called attention to the significance of what he calls "the anti-rabbinic, anti-pharisaic manifesto of Jesus." He maintains that it was not an attack upon an evil system that belonged simply to the first century, but that his words concern conditions of today. "Rabbinism and Pharisaism are hard to kill; while the world lasts true Christianity, the religion of the spirit, will have to reckon with their deadly opposition, if not as open avowed foes, then under the more dangerous guise of special friends—traditionalism and formalism zealous for the letter, killing the spirit, betraying the sacred liberties of the religion of good hope, through which we draw nigh with filial confidence to God." No one can study the life of Jesus with an attempt to understand the underlying motives and plans which governed his whole course of conduct without recognizing the justness of this view. But it has an even deeper significance. In it there is a universality and sense of religious equality which altogether refute the position that Jesus thought only of and referred to a regenerate Israel. Not alone in those parables to which too little weight has of late been

given by Wendt and Schwartzkopff, but in the antithesis which he repeatedly drew between his work and scribism, does this anti-Judaistic thought of Jesus appear. *A priori* it is wholly unlikely that one who saw so clearly the content of religion should have failed to see its extent as well. For Jesus to reject Jewish ceremonialism, Mosaic distinctions of meats, and the ascetic and Sabbatarian positions of the pharisaic traditional law, quite as much as to insist upon sonship of God, as the indispensable and sole prerequisite of membership in the kingdom, was to sweep Judaism off the board. But this is the essence of Paulinism, and is not to be overlooked in a time that is over-eager to exaggerate the differences between Jesus and his great follower. Paulinism in this particular is but a restatement of the central thought of Christ.

**Matt. 5 : 48 and Communism.**—Professor George D. Heron in a recently published paper derives communism, and that of a specific sort, from the words of Jesus, “He [your Heavenly Father] maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust.” His process, in brief, is as follows: These words are the law of perfection. It is a communistic principle: God gives what he produces indiscriminately. That is, the constitution of the universe is communistic, and Jesus never considered any other principle. That he ever contemplated anything else than a communistic society is not open to question on the part of any honest reader or interpreter of such of his sayings as have come down to us. Whatever else Jesus may have taught as religion, the one thing he did teach so clearly that there is no disputing it is, that the gifts of nature, the things of God, the products of social toil belong to men in common. Distribution of the products of service can be only communistic to be Christian; that is, distribution must be to every man according to his need. Any other than a communistic distribution is a collision with God, a collision with the constitution of the universe. This communism of equal distribution extends to vagabonds, thieves, lepers, criminals. There can be no such thing as a rich Christian. A man can get rich, so Jesus seemed to say, in the last analysis only by making others poor. There is no ambition or honor in the kingdom of God.

Legitimate exegesis can never derive such teaching from Jesus’ use of God’s mercy and love to men as a model for men’s not hating their enemies. An examination of the context does not disclose any teachings that could be called economic except the advice to give alms—something that most communists would hardly include in their pro-

gramme. By an exegetical process equally illegitimate in method one would get rather contradictory results from Luke 19 : 24-26 — “to him that hath shall be given” — where the immediate context is wholly dealing with money! If one exegesis is good, so is the other. And one wonders what the same process would do in the case of the apostles who are to sit on twelve thrones (Matt. 19 : 27, 28), or the houses and lands that are to be given members of the kingdom (Matt. 19 : 29), or the one penny paid men who had worked different hours (Matt. 20 : 1-14). Communism may or may not be the ideal and the Christian form of economic life. Our criticism has nothing to do with that. But it is dangerous to claim the authority of Christ for teaching which sees a communistic distribution of wealth according to one's needs in the passage thus used. If Jesus is to be numbered among social teachers, let his words be used with the meaning he gave them. And this meaning is not to be had by guesses or by reading into them one's economic theories, however true they may be, but by the sober processes of exegesis and biblical theology.

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**An Instance of Illegitimate Criticism.** — In the recent volume of Professor Wrede, of Breslau, concerning the “Problem and Method of Biblical Theology,” we have a singular illustration of that method of criticism which first strips a thing of all its essential qualities, and then finds fault with the creature which is thus produced.

In the first chapter we are told that biblical theology is a historical science, and that it is not dependent upon the purpose to “serve the church,” according to Schleiermacher's claim for theology. Therefore biblical theology is not to be limited by any notions of the church concerning the number of the New Testament books, but must apply itself to the literature of the second century as well. In the second chapter the author attacks violently the method of treating biblical theology under a series of “doctrinal conceptions” (*Lehrbegriffe*) which are supposed to give the precise thoughts of a writer or of a book. It is, however, clear, from his objections to these formulations of “doctrinal conceptions,” that the trouble really lies, not so much in the fact of the formulations as in the faults of one or another of the scholars who have done the formulating. In the third chapter he states that he regards the task of New Testament theology as the presentation of the history of the “original Christian religion and theology.” He declares that he is opposed to taking up any but important books. Under this head he then proceeds to rule out 1

Peter, Luke and Acts, Mark and Matthew, 1 Clement, James, the Didaché, the pastoral epistles, 2 Peter and Jude, Polycarp and Hermas. Why did he a moment ago insist on bringing the four uncanonical books of this list into question, if he meant at once to rule them out? The epistle to the Ephesians he is inclined with hesitation to let pass. The Apocalypse, the epistle to the Hebrews, and the epistle of Barnabas he agrees to consider, and, of course, he wishes to discuss the preaching of Jesus, and the theology of Paul, for otherwise he would have nothing at all to do. After a little parleying, he lets the gospel of John pass muster, in spite of his uncertainty as to the originality of its author. Here Wrede again attacks the customary distinction between the doctrinal conceptions (*Lehrbegriffe*) of the various authors, and insists upon it that we have to do, not with the books, but with the earliest Christianity, grasped in its peculiar physiognomy and explained in its historical development. Very good. What New Testament theologian thinks that the task is anything else? But what sane man thinks that he can get from the writings a correct picture of the physiognomy, or of the history of the period, or of Christianity, without treating the writings singly at first, so as to learn what they really say?

Chapter 4 has much to say concerning the advantages of the general view of the material as opposed to the precise view of the contents of the single books. This gives opportunity to say that much is not spoken out in the New Testament, as if the New Testament were intended to present a system of theology. Hereupon the author again breaks a lance on behalf of the necessity of bringing the non-canonical books into account, and draws the uncertain line about at the transition from the apostolic Fathers to the apologists. Finally, in chap. 5, the author indicates how he wishes to shape his New Testament theology. He begins with the doctrine of Jesus. This doctrine of Jesus must, he says, be connected with the person of Jesus, and not be treated as if it were a doctrine that floated in the air. Who among the noted New Testament theologians *does* treat it in this false way? Then he says that it must be dealt with critically. Again, who in modern times has ever thought anything else? Turning to the church, he discovers that the chronology is difficult, likewise the geography, the external events of the time and the persons. All this he insists upon treating in biblical theology, and that as if all other scholars who have dealt with the department did not do the same. Then we learn that Paul requires especial attention, and that we must distinguish between the

faith of the original church upon the Jewish-Christian basis and the position of Christianity where it arose upon a heathen basis (the treatment of these points is very much confused); and, finally, that the theology of John is to be treated separately (as it is in almost all hand-books of New Testament theology). After a renewed generalizing of the relations of the doctrine of Jesus and of the other New Testament persons to the background of Judaism and to the heathenism of that day, the author closes with a remark about the name of the department, insisting upon it that it should not be Theology and not New Testament (because of the later books that he takes into account), but that it should be called: "The Religious History of Early Christianity," or "History of Early Christian Religion and Theology."

The book is as contrary as can well be imagined. The author takes up New Testament theology, and holds unto the name until the last page, but deprives the conception one by one of all the concrete parts that belong to it and substitutes for each another thing. When he has entirely metamorphosed the object of his discussion, he declares of a sudden, on the last page or so, that the name does not suit. How absurd! A man sets about considering the propriety of writing a life of George Washington. Objecting to the correctness or to the desirableness of one trait and another, of one feature and another, of Washington, he supplants them by traits and features of Frederick the Great, although he still holds to the name George Washington. At the end he looks at his creation and says the name does not fit: "It must be called Frederick the Great." He is right. Wrede would appear to have begun his lectures without having an idea of what he would finally say. As the work and the lectures went on, he came to the conclusion that New Testament theology, after all, did not please him so much as the history of the religion of early Christianity, and he accordingly reshaped everything until it suited the new theme, and then closed by changing the name. Premising that the whole arrangement or disarrangement of this book should be changed, one might say that the proper title for the trend of thought expressed in it is: "The Superiority of the History of Early Christian Religion to the Current New Testament Theology." That would be intelligible. In the meantime, those who think that there is something of value in the presentation of the theology of the New Testament books, in their individuality and in their combination with each other, may peaceably go their way unconcerned about this attack upon the department.

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